

P 082154Z NOV 96
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2713
DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
NDIC JOHNSTOWN PA
SECDEF WASHDC//OCDEPS//
DIRNSA FT GEORGE G MEADE
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 0628
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 010967

STATE FOR ARA/AND, INL, DRL
NSC FOR JAMES DOBBINS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
USIA FOR AR, I/GAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/01
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: FARC DESERTER CLAIMS 30 CAPTURED SOLDIERS DEAD

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECONOFF S.K. ABEYTA. REASON 1.5(D).

SUMMARY

2. (C) A FARC DESERTER HAS REPORTED THAT 30 OF THE 60 COLOMBIAN SOLDIERS CAPTURED BY THE FARC ARE DEAD. ALTHOUGH THE REPORT COULD NOT BE CONFIRMED, THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE INDICATED THE GOC WILL USE THIS INFORMATION IN AN EFFORT TO CAPITALIZE ON ADVERSE PUBLICITY ON THE FARC. END SUMMARY.

FARC DESERTER REPORTS 30 CAPTURED SOLDIERS DEAD

3. (C) DURING A BRIEF MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR NOVEMBER 7, MINISTER OF DEFENSE ESGUERRA PRESENTED A COPY OF A FAX SENT TO THE DIRECTOR OF CM&, A COLOMBIAN TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM, BY AN INDIVIDUAL CLAIMING TO HAVE RECENTLY DESERTED FROM THE FARC. ACCORDING TO THIS INDIVIDUAL, SOME 30 OF THE 60 COLOMBIAN ARMY SOLDIERS CAPTURED AT LAS DELICIAS AUGUST 30 ARE DEAD -- SOME DIED OF WOUNDS, OTHERS WERE EXECUTED WHEN THEY TRIED TO ESCAPE, AND STILL OTHERS DIED OF MALARIA. THE FARC DESERTER CONTINUES TO SAY THE FARC LEADERSHIP IS AT A LOSS TO JUSTIFY THE DEATHS OF THOSE SOLDIERS AND THEREFORE IS DELAYING THE RELEASE OF THE OTHERS CAPTURED IN EXPECTATION OF AN EVENTUAL ARMED CONFRONTATION WITH THE COLOMBIAN ARMY. THE FARC WOULD THEN CLAIM THE 30 DEAD SOLDIERS WERE CASUALTIES OF THAT CONFRONTATION AND BLAME THE GOVERNMENT FOR THEIR DEATHS.

COMMENT

4. (C) ESGUERRA WAS CLEARLY EAGER TO PASS ON THIS INFORMATION, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NOT YET CONFIRMED THE LETTER'S AUTHENTICITY. NOR HAD HE ASKED HIMSELF SOME OBVIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS CONTENT -- FOR EXAMPLE, HOW THE FARC EXPECTED TO PASS OFF AS RECENT COMBAT CASUALTIES THE CADAVERS OF SOLDIERS LONG DEAD. IF TRUE, HOWEVER, THE CAPTIVE SOLDIERS' DEATHS WILL HAVE SEVERE REPERCUSSIONS. THE MOD UNDERSTANDABLY WANTS TO CAPITALIZE ON ADVERSE PUBLICITY ABOUT THE FARC AND ITS CYNICAL TACTICS TO DELAY HANDING OVER THE SOLDIERS IT MADE A GREAT SHOW OF PROMISING TO RELEASE WITHIN A WEEK OF THE LAS DELICIAS ATTACK.

FRECHETTE